

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, May 6. 1710.

IN my last, I stated the true Cause of the late Act of Parliament, for Regulating the Prices of Bread; and I do not see any Reason to alter any thing of it — Most certain it is, that the Bakers Imposing upon the People, as well in Weight, as in the Prices of Bread, was the Original Cause of the Act; and I believe no Body will deny, but the Occasion was just.

If any Objection lies against this Act, in the Name of those Bakers, who did not impose upon the People; I Answer, That there are Honest Men among them, that have not been Guilty of the Fraud, is no Question; I do not in the least Attack them, nor will the Act Regulating the Assize, inflict

any Punishment upon them — And if I knew any Way to distinguish such, from the rest, and leave them free of any Hardships this Act brings upon them, I would readily do it.

Let no Man therefore mistake me, as if I was Trampling down the whole Trade, or pulling the Mob upon the Bakers in general, to force them to Trade, to their manifest undoing — I shall therefore clear up the Case as I go, and if I injure any Man, I shall readily make it out that it is not my Intention, and shall state any Complaint they can make, if they please to give me the particulars, so as to take away either the Cause, or clear up the Mistake.

That.

That the Bakers in General (*With due Allowance to the Honest ones above*) have been in a manner Unlimited, and Uninspected, and have from thence taken a Liberty, especially in the Out-parts of this City, and in the Countries, to Impose upon the People, both in the Price, and in the Weight of their Bread—— This I presume will not be Disputed; if it is, I shall enter into the Demonstration of it when they please.

This, as it was the Occasion of this late Act, so it clears up the necessity of a Law in general, for a Regulation of the Assize of Bread—— The Parliament have from the very beginning of this heavy expensive War, shewn a great Tenderness, and a constant regard to the Poor—— And all the offers at General Excises, Stock upon Land, &c. have been Opposed, purely on the Account of sparing the Poor—— Necessaries of Life therefore have never been Tax'd, such as Corn, Cattle, Fish, Flesh, Cloaths, and the like; what ever Impositions lie on our Trade, Wine, Ale, Spirits, Salt, Coal, Candles, &c. Yet the Absolutley Necessary part of Life, on which the Poor do Subsist, and without which they cannot live, these have been free; you have no Tolls on your Corn, no Tax-Gatherers appear in your Markets—— While your Neighbours pay something to the Government for every Bunch of Turnep they Eat—— And all this is our concern for the Poor.

But this Concern would be very imperfect, and the Poor reap no part of the Benefit, if at the same time, that no Tax is laid upon them by the Government, they shall have an Imposition forc'd upon them by the Baker, Equivalent to a Tax upon Bread.

These things I think, are a full Defence of the thing now complain'd of, and a proof of the Necessity of making a General Regulation of the Assize of Bread—— And I persuade my self, no Body will Object against it—— But I am brought by this, to a new Argument in behalf of the Bakers, (*Viz.*) That let the making a Regulation be necessary or not, the Dispute is not there, but against the Terms of the

Regulation now Fix'd; which being settled upon the Foot of Antient Calculations, when the People used another kind of Bread, than they do now—— The Bakers *Bona Fide* cannot comply with it, without manifest Loss, and consequently Ruin to their Trade.

I should be saying nothing to the purpose, if I should say the Bakers ought to be compell'd to Bake to their Loss; for that would be to make Law Destructive to the Thing it is design'd to preserve, and be bringing the Bakers soon to a Condition not to bake at all; which is not the End—— But, say the Bakers—— The Act has settled three sorts of Bread, White, Wheaten, and Household—— The two first they can comply with, but the last they cannot; and the Reason assigned is, Because this Act being Founded upon former Assizes, (*Viz.*) Such as were in use in the Days of Henry VIII, and that kind of Bread being quite differing, *that is I suppose for Coarser*, than is now called Household Bread, they cannot make it of the same Weight—— This is really a just way of Arguing, and so far the Bakers are in the Right.

But to come to the Point; This no way justifies the warm Resolutions of the Bakers, not to bake at all—— which tended in itself to Mob and Confusion—— But might end in this, that the White, and the Wheaten, which they own they can Comply with, might be baked, and the Household Bread, if it must be of such a Weight, might be let alone, and the same kind of Brown Bread baked, which the People formerly were satisfied with, and which they can afford,

In doing this, there had been no Injury done to any Body, for the Poor had not been without Bread, the Bakers had a sufficient Argument to defend themselves, against any suggested Fraud, by demonstrating, that they could not do otherwise—— They that would not Eat the Coarse Bread, might have the Fine Wheaten, or White if they pleased; and they that would neither have one or other, might bake for themselves.

I do not at all see that any part of the Act, forbids the Bakers making Course Bread, for that which we call Household Bread, tho' it is baked for the common use in *London*, yet in other Parts of *England*, the poorer People eat much browner Bread; nor shall I be ever one of those that will Complain, if they do so here, especially if they have the more for their Money; besides we are to consider, this Assize of Bread is not stated for *London* only, but for the Country also, and for *North-Brittain* too, and the Poor are to be consider'd in other Parts, as well as here.

It may be answer'd, that by the Assize, no Brown Bread is to be made, and to make all White, or Wheaten, would both Consume too great a Quantity of Corn, in a Time of Scarcity, and also raise the Price too high, for the Poor to comply with; but to this I Answer, (1) I do not see but by the Act, the Bakers may bake brown Bread, that is, that they are not prohibited; if there be No Assize stated for it, that does not amount to a prohibition, and others agree with me in this Opinion; nay, some Bakers are of this Mind, and have already baked brown Bread.—— If then the General Baking the White and Wheaten, shall rise the Fine Bread, it will glut the Market with the Coarse or Ordinary, and consequently lower the Price of that, and this will both accrue to the Baker, and also to the Poor.—— No Man will ever complain of it as a National Grievance, that the Fine Bread is Dear, *if the Ordinary is Cheap*: We shall never go Naked for the *Deareness of Silk*, if our *Wool be but Cheap*; we shall never cry out of Famine for want of *White Bread*.—— The Complaint is, The Poor, it is the Poor have been Impos'd upon, and Injur'd by the Bakers, and it is the Poor this Law is made to relieve.

The Care of our Legislators is evident to point at this, in that the Bakers have Latitude enough left them, in the White, and Wheaten Bread; it is only the Ordinary or Household Bread, that pinches them, and in this, as I said above, if they cannot live, they may *lay down the Sort*, make a

Coarser kind, give it a proportion'd Honest Weight, and if the Poor will make a Noise for want of White Bread, every Body will be on the Bakers Sides: But to say they will not bake at all, favour'd of a Temper, not at all suitable to the present Time, and could aim at nothing but making a General Confusion among the People.


And what could the People do?—— It is impossible to repeal any part of the Act, but by the Parliament that made it; and all they need to ask of the Parliament, *if it were come*, is, to add an Assize for brown Bread, such as the Bakers can comply with, and such as in concert with them, may be equally stated.—— And then if the Household Bread cannot be afforded, the Poor will yet be supply'd with good and wholesome Bread and Cheap, tho' not quite so Fine as before.

Also I may give them a hint, that brown Bred being thus Bak'd and Sold, will be some help to the Bakers, to reduce the Disadvantage of the Household Sort, and set one sort against another, make them able to afford the Midling sort, as well in its proportion, as they can the Fine and the Coarse.

My Design in this Paper, is not at all to oppress the Bakers, or excite the People against them; and a Gentleman who has sent me a long Letter on that Head, *tho' without a Name*, mistakes me very much, and I think Wrongs me too, in suggesting it— *But the End is this*, to bring things to a clear Light, and state matters so between the Poor, and the Bakers, that the one may not be Injur'd by the other; and this I think is a necessary Work. I am inform'd her Majesty has signified her Pleasure to the Magistrates, that the Bakers should go on a few Days, till the Experiment may be made, and an Account of things laid before the Government.—— And I think had the Magistrates done their Duty, this Experiment might have been made before, and things not suffer'd to run to the last Day; as if Tumults and popular Clamours were of no Consequence

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